

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-14 ISO-00 PA-02 H-02
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PM-05 L-03 MCT-01 INR-10 /095 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/P:WBHARRIS:DP
APPROVED BY NEA/P:REUNDELAND
S/PRS - MR. CARTER
H - MR. FLATEN
SSM - MR. MC ANDREW
NEA - MR. NEUMANN
NEA/IAI - MR. SMITH
NEA/ARN - MR. DRAPER
NEA/EGY - MR. NEWBERRY
NEA/ARP - MR. TWINAM

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O 240111Z FEB 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
USCINCEUR
DOD
JSC
CIA
USIA
NSC

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CINCEUR FOR POLAD; TEL AVIV FOR PAO, DELIVER BY 9 A.M.

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:PFOR

SUBJECT:DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - FEBRUARY 23, 1978

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS
FROM DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING FOR FEBRUARY 23. FYI ONLY,
OFFICER PRESENT TODAY WAS HODDING CARTER:

Q. THERE IS A REPORT CIRCULATING AROUND TOWN, ATTRIBUTED
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TO ISRAELI SOURCES, THAT EGYPT BROKE UP THE NEGOTIATIONS
JANUARY 18TH, NOT BECAUSE THEY WEREN'T GOING VERY WELL,
BUT INDEED BECAUSE THEY WERE NEARING SUCCESS. I WONDERED
FIRST OF ALL IF YOU COULD TELL US WHETHER THE UNITED
STATES WAS REACHING THE POINT WHERE A DECLARATION OF
PRINCIPLES APPEARED IN THE OFFING, AND SECONDLY, WHETHER
YOU THINK, INDEED, EGYPT BROKE OFF THE TALKS BECAUSE THEY
FEARED SUCCESS MORE THAN FAILURE?

A. I'D ANSWER NO TO THE SECOND POINT. WE BELIEVE THAT THE
REASONS THEY GAVE AT THE TIME FOR BREAKING THEM OFF ARE
THE ONLY REASONS THAT WE HAVE HEARD OF ANY SORT. BUT
BEYOND THAT, WHAT THE SECRETARY SAID AT THE TIME WAS THE
STATE, WE WERE IN FACT MAKING SOME PROGRESS. I THINK, IF
YOU RECALL, THOSE OF YOU WHO WERE THERE, ONE OF THE ITEMS

OF SOME HUMOR WAS THAT THE THREE SPOKESMEN CAME OUT AT
ABOUT 5:30 IN THE AFTERNOON TO ANNOUNCE THAT THINGS
WERE GOING ALONG FAIRLY WELL, AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER,
THEY NO LONGER HAD A FULL DELEGATION THERE.

YES, WE WERE MAKING SOME PROGRESS. I WOULD NOT SUGGEST
THAT ALL THE HURDLES HAD BEEN JUMPED AT ALL, BUT WE WERE
MAKING SOME ON THE DECLARATION.

Q. I DON'T REMEMBER THE REASONS THEY GAVE AT THE TIME, DO
YOU? I REMEMBER THE REASONS KEPT CHANGING, BUT WHAT WERE

THE REASONS.

A. I REALLY DON'T WANT TO SPEAK FOR THE EGYPTIANS HERE EXCEPT TO SAY THAT WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND THAT THEY LEFT BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT THERE WOULD BE AGREEMENT. THE GENERAL UNDERSTANDING WE HAD THEN WAS THAT THEY WERE REACTING TO AN ATMOSPHERE THAT THEY FELT EXISTED.

Q. YOU SAID YOU WERE MAKING PROGRESS. IN FAVOR OF WHAT, UNCLASSIFIED

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A NEUTRAL STAND, OR TO THE ISRAELIS OR TO THE EGYPTIANS?

A. PROGRESS TOWARD THE CREATION OF A GENERAL STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES, ITEM ONE ON THE THREE-PART AGENDA WE HAD OUT THERE.

Q. WHAT IS THAT STATUS OF THE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES AT THIS POINT?

A. I THINK ROY ATHERTON HAS PROBABLY HAD THE LAST THING TO SAY ON THAT YESTERDAY WHEN HE DEPARTED JERUSALEM, AND THAT IS SIMPLY THAT WE'RE BACK TO THE BUSINESS OF MOVING BETWEEN THE PARTIES IN AN ATTEMPT TO BRIDGE IT, THAT WE PROBABLY ARE NOT GOING TO BE GIVING -- AS HE SAID, TEMPERATURE READINGS AT EVERY STOP BECAUSE THIS IS GOING TO BE ON A PROTRACTED BASIS.

Q. HOW CAN YOU BE SO POSITIVE BY SAYING NO TO THE SECOND POINT OF THE QUESTION?

A. SIMPLY THAT, NO, WE HAVE NO INDICATION THAT THAT WAS IN ANY WAY THE REASON FOR THE BREAKING OFF -- THAT OF ALL REASONS THAT WE HAVE HEARD FROM THE EGYPTIANS, NONE OF IT WOULD GO TO THAT END.

Q. WAS IT CONVINCING TO YOU?

A. WE ACCEPT WHAT THE PARTIES TELL US AS BEING THE REASON FOR THEIR ACTIONS.

Q. ACTUALLY, YOU'RE CONTRADICTING YOURSELF. YOU'RE SAYING, "WE WERE MAKING PROGRESS ON THAT" AND THEN YOU UNCLASSIFIED

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SAY THEY OFFER US THE REASONINGS.

A. WE ACCEPTED THE GOOD FAITH OF THE PARTIES. IF THEY TELL US WHAT THEIR REASONS ARE FOR SOMETHING, WE BELIEVE

THEM.

Q. BUT THAT DOESN'T ANSWER THE QUESTION. WAS IT CONVIN-
CING, THE REASONS WHY THE EGYPTIANS BROKE?

A. WELL, IT CERTAINLY WAS CONVINCING. THE THING WAS
BROKEN OFF, AND THEY GAVE US THEIR REASONS; AND THE TWO
WE HAVE TO TAKE IN CONJUNCTION.

Q. THERE'S BEEN A REPORT HERE THAT SAYS THE PRESIDENT
EXPRESSED CONDOLENCES TO SADAT ABOUT THE LOSSES AT CYPRUS
AND SO FORTH. THE REPORT SAYS: "IN HIS MESSAGE, THE
UNITED STATES PRESIDENT EXPRESSED HIS SUPPORT FOR PRESI-
DENT SADAT'S DECISION TO SEND A SHOCK FORCE TO FREE THE
HOSTAGES FROM THE TERRORISTS...THOSE KILLED IN THE OPERA-
TION WERE MARTYRS OF A NOBLE CAUSE." COULD YOU TELL US
ANYTHING ABOUT THE LETTER FROM PRESIDENT CARTER TO
PRESIDENT SADAT?

A. NO. FIRST, I HAVE NOT SEEN AND HAVE NO INFORMATION
ON SUCH A COMMUNICATION. I HAVE BEEN ADVISED THAT THE
BEST PLACE TO GO FOR AN ANSWER TO THE QUESTIONS THAT THAT
PARTICULAR NEWS ARTICLE MIGHT REAISE WOULD BE THE WHITE
HOUSE. I, LITERALLY, DON'T HAVE ANYTHING ON IT.

Q. THERE IS A REPORT FROM BEIRUT YESTERDAY ATTRIBUTED TO
PALESTINIAN SOURCES THAT APPEARS IN SOME RESPECTS TO
COORBORATE THE REPORTS FROM CYPRUS THAT A PALESTINIAN
ARMED ELITE FORCE WAS, IN FACT, AT LARNACA. DO YOU HAVE
ANYTHING MORE ON THAT?

A. NO. I HAVE SEEN, AS WE ALL HAVE, A NUMBER OF REPORTS
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COMING FROM VARIOUS SPOKESMEN FOR VARIOUS PALESTINIAN
GROUPS, THE PLO AND OTHERS, HIGHLY CONTRADICTIONARY, OF
OFFICIAL DENIALS FROM OFFICIAL PLO SOURCES, SOME OTHER
FACTIONS WITHIN SUGGESTING OTHER THINGS. I DO NOT HAVE
ANYTHING MORE, AND I ASKED THE QUESTION AGAIN DIRECTLY
THIS MORNING ON THAT SUBJECT TODAY.

IS THE GOVERNMENT OR THE STATE DEPARTMENT SYMPATHETIC
TO EGYPT'S EFFORT TO GET THEIR HANDS ON THE TERRORISTS?
DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT UNDERSTAND THAT IF SOMEONE'S
THE VICTIM OF TERRORISM, THAT THEY WANT TO GET THE
TERRORISTS TO DEAL WITH THEM THROUGH THEIR OWN SYSTEM
OF JUSTICE?

A. WHAT WE ARE SYMPATHETIC TO IS THE NEED TO BRING
TERRORISTS TO JUSTICE, AND TO HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE FOR
THEIR CRIMES. AND IT IS OUR POSITION, OF COURSE, THAT
THAT SHOULD BE THE RESULT OF TERRORISM, BUT I AM NOT

PREPARED NOW TO GIVE -- BECAUSE I DO NOT HAVE -- SOME OFFICIAL POSITION AS TO WHO IS THE PROPER AGENT FOR CARRYING OUT THE LEGAL PROCESS FOR DEALING WITH THESE TERRORISTS WHO HAVE BEEN CAPTURED. I THINK ORDINARILY IT IS THOSE IN WHOSE TERRITORY THE CRIME WAS COMMITTED AND IN WHICH THEY ARE CAUGHT.

Q. BUT ISN'T IT LOGICAL THAT THE INJURED PARTY WOULD BE MORE INCLINED TO MAKE TERRORISTS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR CRIMES, AND DOESN'T THE HISTORY OF TERRORISM SHOW THAT WHEN THE INJURED PARTY DOESN'T GET ITS HANDS ON THE TERRORISTS, THEY OFTEN ARE RELEASED OR THEY OFTEN ARE SWAPPED FOR A KIDNAPPED OFFICIAL? IS THERE NOTHING YOU CAN SAY TO SUPPORT EGYPT'S EFFORT BASED ON PAST HISTORY?

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A. I CAN TAKE A SERIES OF QUESTIONS FROM YOU BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW OUR EXACT LEGAL POSITION ON THE QUESTION. I WOULD DOUBT THAT I COULD, IN ANY WAY RIGHT NOW, SUGGEST ANYTHING WITHOUT WALKING OVER TERRITORY I'M NOT TOO GOOD AT. TO ANSWER ONE QUESTION, YES, OF COURSE THE RECORD IS REplete WITH TERRORISTS WHO HAVE BEEN RELEASED FOR VARIOUS REASONS BY COUNTRIES IN WHICH THEY WERE FINALLY EITHER APPREHENDED OR GAVE THEMSELVES UP. BUT I CAN'T SPEAK TO THE REST OF IT.

Q. I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE YOU BACK TO THE QUESTION, WHERE YOU SPOKE OF THE FACT THAT THE EGYPTIANS WERE REACTING TO A CERTAIN ATMOSPHERE. AMERICAN OFFICIALS WERE IN THOSE MEETINGS. DID THEY NOTICE THIS ATMOSPHERE, AND WAS IT EMANATING FROM THE ISRAELIS, AND IS IT NOW CONTINUING OR IS IT MISSING SO THAT THE TALKS MAY GO FORWARD?

A. LET ME SAY I'M NOT GOING TO ATTEMPT TO QUALIFY OR QUANTIFY OR IN ANY WAY CHARACTERIZE THE ATMOSPHERE. I'M SIMPLY TELLING YOU WHAT THEY SAY WERE THE REASONS AND HOW THEY DESCRIBED THEM. I WOULD SAY, HOWEVER, THAT BOTH SIDES HAVE EXPRESSED A WILLINGNESS TO GO FORWARD WITH THE

PROCESS, LEADING TOWARD A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES, AND THAT'S WHY ROY ATHERTON WENT BACK THERE, BECAUSE OF THEIR EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS ON BOTH SIDES TO DO IT. AND I REALLY CAN'T LOOK BEYOND THAT EITHER. BUT THAT IS WHY HE'S THERE. HE WOULDN'T BE THERE IF WE DIDN'T HAVE THAT.

Q. YOU SUGGESTED BEFORE THAT THIS QUESTION RELATED TO THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER BE TAKEN TO THE WHITE HOUSE. BUT DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR THE EGYPTIAN COMMANDO RAID?

A. THE LITERAL ANSWER FOR THIS IS: NO.

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Q. "NOT YET?" OR "DO NOT SUPPORT?" OR WHAT?

A. THE QUESTION HASN'T ARISEN. NO.

Q. ALL RIGHT. SO NOW I RAISE IT.

A. THE ANSWER IS I HAVE NO COMMENT ON THAT MATTER WHICH IS BETWEEN CYPRUS AND EGYPT, AND WHICH I AM NOT GOING TO COMMENT ON.

WHAT WE DID COMMENT ON WAS OUR CONDEMNATION OF THE TERRORIST ACT, ITSELF. WHAT I SAID IN THAT STATEMENT I READ THAT INsofar AS THE MATTERS SUCCEEDING THAT WERE CONCERNED, THAT I HAVE NO COMMENT.

Q. AND HAVE YOU TAKEN THE QUESTION ABOUT A US VIEW ON WHERE THE TRIAL OF THE TWO ASSASSINS SHOULD BE? SHOULD CYPRUS TURN THE TWO OVER TO EGYPT?

A. I DON'T THINK THAT OUR VIEW REALLY IS RELEVANT. THE PROBLEM IS THAT THIS IS REALLY NOT A MATTER IN WHICH THE UNITED STATES HAS A DIRECT INVOLVEMENT. THIS REALLY IS A MATTER FOR CYPRUS, EGYPT, AND I DO NOT WISH TO PUT THE UNITED STATES, AT THIS POINT, IN WHAT IS OBVIOUSLY ALREADY A TENDER SITUATION, ANY MORE FORWARD.

Q. IF THE EGYPTIANS HAD NOT TAKEN THIS ACTION ON WHICH YOU CHOOSE NOT TO COMMENT, WHAT DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT COVCEIVETWOULD BE OF HOPE TO HOSTAGES? UNITED NATIONS INTERVENTION, POSSIBLY? OR WHAT? IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT HOPE WOULD WE SUGGEST, IF WE DON'T WANT TO COMMENT TO BACK UP THE EGYPTIAN COMMANDOES THAT TRIED TO RELEASE THESE HOSTAGES, JUST WHAT DO WE SUGGEST? THE HAGUE?
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A. I THINK YOU ARE RAISING A DECENT POINT HERE, BUT THE ANSWER IS THAT I AM NEITHER ATTACKING NOR SUPPORTING. I AM REALLY SUGGESTING THAT AT THIS POINT IT SERVES NO PURPOSE FOR US TO SUGGEST WHAT WAYS? WHAT WE DO SUGGEST STRONGLY, IS THAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WHICH, MEANS ALL NATIONS, HAS AN OBLIGATION TO MOVE FORCEFULLY AND COOPERATIVELY AGAINST TERRORISM, AND IN ALL ITS FORMS. AND THAT IS CLEAR AND WE HAVE EXPRESSED THAT A NUMBER OF TIMES. BUT ON THIS SPECIFIC CASE, I DO NOT THINK IT SERVES ANY PURPOSE FOR THE UNITED STATES TO COMMENT ON THE SPECIFIC ACTS.

Q. BY THE "INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY" YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS?

A. WELL I AM REALLY TALKING ABOUT ALL THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD, WITHOUT RELATION TO INSTITUTIONAL FORUMS -- THOUGH WE THINK THAT OBVIOUSLY, THE UNITED NATIONS HAS A ROLE AS TO OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANS IN DEALING WITH TERRORISM.

Q. ARE THE ARABS HAVING ANY EFFECT ON THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS?

A. OH, I WOULDN'T SPECULATE ON THAT. I COULDN'T.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY ANSWER TO MY QUESTIONS YESTERDAY THAT CYPRUS HAS BEEN A GUN-RUNNING CENTER?

A. NO, I DON'T. THEY HAVE NOT COME DOWN. THEY ARE TAKEN. I DOUBT HOW MUCH I'LL BE ABLE TO GET AS I TOLD YOU YESTERDAY.

Q. TO GO BACK TO THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES: WHAT IS NEEDED IN THE AMERICAN VIEW, AND WHAT IS NEEDED NOW TO UNCLASSIFIED

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GET AN AGREEMENT ON A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES IN SPECIFIC TERMS?

A. AGREEMENT BY BOTH SIDES. WHAT YOU ARE ASKING FOR IS SORT OF A STATEMENT ON WHERE WE ARE -- AND I GUESS THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT I CAN'T GIVE. ROY IS RATHER STUDIOUSLY AVOIDING DOING IT AND HE IS IN THE FIELD, AND I THINK I AM CONSTRAINED TO DO THE SAME THING.

Q. CAN YOU RECALL WHETHER LAST OCTOBER THE DEPARTMENT MADE A COMMENT ON THE GERMAN RAID IN SOMALIA?

A. MY OWN MEMORY OF IT WAS THAT WE UNDOUBTEDLY SAID SOMETHING, SOME RELIEF THAT THE RELEASE OF THE HOSTAGES, SOME STATEMENT ABOUT THE ATTITUDES OF THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT IN THIS THING. I DON'T REMEMBER THE EXACT TEXT OF IT, BUT I THINK WE DID SAY SOMETHING.

Q. I WAS WONDERING WHY YOU CAN'T SAY SOMETHING IN THIS CASE AT ALL?

A. I DON'T WANT TO STRESS THE OBVIOUS, BUT THERE ARE SOME DIFFERENCES.

Q. THE US GOVERNMENT HAD ACCEPTED 242 AS THE BASIS FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND NOW YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT MR. ATHERTON SHUTTling BETWEEN EGYPT AND

ISRAEL TO REACH A GENERAL AGREEMENT OF PRINCIPLES. WOULD YOU BE SEEING THEM SEEKING SOME KIND OF ALTERATION ABOUT 242 INSTEAD OF WORKING UNDER THE SAME 242, OR WHAT IS IT?

A. THE BASIS OF OUR WHOLE EFFORT, AS YOU KNOW, IS 242, AND THAT REMAINS SO.
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Q. WHY DON'T THEY MAKE IT VERY OBVIOUS THEN AND CALL ON ISRAEL TO WITHDRAW FROM ARAB TERRITORIES, TO COMPLY WITH 242?

A. WE HAVE CALLED ON ALL THE PARTIES TO, IN FACT --

Q. SO, WHAT IS THE SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY FOR RIGHT NOW?

A. THE SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY IS TO TRY TO FIND WAYS IN WHICH THE LANGUAGE OF 242 CAN BE ALSO INCORPORATED INTO A SET OF PRINCIPLES WHICH WILL LEAD TO AN OVER-ALL NEGOTIATION OF THE PROBLEM.

Q. THE NEW YORK TIMES REPORTED NEW SETTLEMENTS TO BE ESTABLISHED IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ON THAT OR IS THAT NOT CORRECT?

A. NO. I SAW THAT THE WORLD ZIONIST ORGANIZATION -- I CAN'T REMEMBER THE EXACT TITLE -- WAS MEETING AND THEY WERE DISCUSSING PLANS, BUT I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING BEYOND THAT.

Q. WELL, WILL YOU BE DOING SOMETHING? WILL YOU BE CONTACTING THE ISRAELIS IN THAT REGARD?

A. WELL, THAT'S NOT PRECISELY A GOVERNMENT FUNCTION. I MEAN THAT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL IS TALKING ABOUT RIGHT NOW. THAT'S SOMETHING THAT THE ORGANIZATION IS TALKING ABOUT. I DON'T HAVE ANY COMMENT ON IT RIGHT NOW.

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